

Sustainable Belmont's Cleaning the Air Campaign Working with the Faith Community

Background

Sustainable Belmont is a Task Force of the Vision 21 Implementation Committee. This task force was given a mandate by the town to "develop and implement a variety of activities and initiatives to assist Belmont's government, residents, and businesses in becoming a more environmentally responsible community."

One of its initial activities was to develop a greenhouse gas emissions inventory. The town would use this inventory to develop a targeted *Climate Action Plan* to reduce emissions over time. Based on the work completed for that project, mobile sources, e.g., cars, trucks and buses, were identified as major sources of greenhouse gas emissions in Belmont. Mobile sources also contribute significant amounts of pollution that impact public health. For example, diesel exhaust contains fine particles that can penetrate deeply into the lungs and cause breathing difficulties, respiratory infections, and attacks of asthma and chronic bronchitis. Gasoline exhaust contains toxic carbon monoxide and a range of hazardous pollutants that contribute to smog and make breathing difficult for everyone.

In April, 2006, the Town of Belmont was awarded a grant from Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to develop an anti-idling campaign.¹ The grant provided \$1,500 toward road signs, fact sheets, and decals for use throughout the Town. Sustainable Belmont has agreed to carry out the planning and implementation phases of this MA DEP grant.

Implementing the Cleaning the Air Campaign

In essence, the Cleaning the Air Campaign has three parts:

- working to make Belmont an *Idle Free Community*;
- encouraging the use of clean diesel technologies; and
- making Belmont a pedestrian friendly town (including promoting Safe Routes to Schools programs).

Sustainable Belmont began implementing the MA DEP Idle Free Program by working with the town and focusing on the municipal sector, including the public schools, parks, community development department, and the police department. Future activities include providing information to the faith communities and business in Belmont. Attached is a listing of all the work we've done to date.

Why Work with the Faith Community

There are many reasons why we want to reach out to the faith community to support this effort. Most importantly, asking congregants to turn off their engines, carpool, and leave their car at home if possible is more meaningful coming from someone who is trusted. We are also able to expand the audience for this message. You will be able to provide this information to community members who may not be involved with the schools or town government. For those who have heard about this before, the faith community will reinforce our message which will help change behavior.

¹ In Massachusetts it is illegal to idle for more than five minutes. Most people are unaware of this. We have attached a copy of the state law to this note.

What You Can Do

The good news is this campaign is easy to implement. We have found, for the most part, once people are educated about the reasons not to idle they are happy to turn their engines off. There are a number of ways you and your congregation can support this campaign.

- *Put up a sign* in your parking lot to remind people that Belmont is an idle free community. The signs cost around \$25.00 apiece. Sustainable Belmont can help you get these signs.
- *Provide information* about the idling campaign to your congregation, either through your newsletter, from the pulpit, through your religious school, or however you feel most comfortable. Sustainable Belmont is happy to provide draft language for a newsletter or talking points that will help you explain this campaign.
- Ask congregants to *sign a pledge* that they will not idle. Experience has shown that people are more likely to change behavior if they have signed a pledge to do so. The pledges also provide SB information about how many people this campaign has reached. Attached is a copy of a pledge sheet you can use.
- *Reward* those who pledge with a car decal. The idle-free car decal reminds people about their pledge. Included with this information is a sample decal.
- *Remind businesses* that make deliveries to your congregation to turn their engines off, it's the law. Attached is a copy of the law.
- *Ask for help.* Sustainable Belmont is more than happy to provide you with additional information about this campaign and other work we are doing to make Belmont an environmentally responsible community.

If you have additional questions or would like additional information for your congregations please contact one of us from Sustainable Belmont's Cleaning the Air Campaign.

Cleaning the Air Campaign

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Chronology of events of Sustainable Belmont's
Cleaning the Air Campaign

- In April, 2006, SB submitted an application to the MA Department of Environment a grant to begin an anti-idling program
- In June, 2006, the Town of Belmont was awarded \$1,500 toward an anti-idling campaign from the MA DEP
- In June, 2006, SB members attended a monthly meeting of Belmont's Department Heads to inform them of the MA DEP grant and the anti-idling campaign, answer questions and receive support. Contact is being made with each of the departments individually to provide deeper understanding of the program and gather ideas for additional support.
- In June, 2006, SB conducted observation research at each of the public schools to determine idling behaviors around the schools and parks.
- Also in June, 2006, SB members met with Dr. Holland, the Superintendent of Belmont Public Schools. Dr. Holland has endorsed the program and SB's plan and has offered to:
 - send a letter to parents at the beginning of the school year (September 2006) about the health issues surrounding idling and requesting drivers to consider alternatives to driving (this has been done)
 - include tips and reminders in the principals' monthly newsletters; and
 - remind school bus drivers of idling requirements and laws
 - attended elementary school PTA/PTO meetings
- SB members have discussed the program with Sgt Hamilton who supports the plan and has agreed to:
 - prepare traffic officers regarding the issuance of warnings (first 9-months) and monetary ticketing thereafter
 - educate police officers of the facts and myths about idling so that they may be more prepared to speak about the issues and understanding of future enforcement of MA 5 minute idling law:
 - evaluate whether officers' cars must be running in order for on-board safety computers and equipment to run, e.g., leading by example, and
 - include enforcement of anti-idling laws within the Citizen Herald announcement section
- SB received support from the town Selectman and worked with Peter Castanino of the DPW to identify exact locations for thirty anti-idling signs to be hung in town at key locations, including schools and playing fields.
- The Selectmen, Dept. Heads, Vision 21 Implementation Committee, wrote a "Guest Perspective" that was published in the Belmont Citizen Herald supporting Belmont becoming an idle free town.
- SB has developed outreach material to provide quick information about the problems with idling. Attached is a Fact Sheet with myths and facts about idling, as well as a copy of the MA Anti-idling law.
- Provided information to all town employees, including teachers, on how to be idle free. (Winter 06/07)
- Made presentations at elementary school PTA meetings.
- SB is working with the town, is planning on submitting a grant to DEP to fund a part-time coordinator for the Cleaning the Air Campaign.

Idling Myths and Facts for Cars

Fact: Idling Gets Us Nowhere

| Myths | | Facts |
|---|--|--|
| The engine should be warmed up before driving. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ ◆ ◆ | <p>Idling is not an effective way to warm up a vehicle.</p> <p>Driving is the best way to warm up an engine.</p> <p>An engine will be sufficiently warm after 30 seconds, even on a winter day.</p> |
| Idling is good for your engine. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ | <p>Engines are designed to drive, not idle.</p> <p>Excessive idling can damage engine components including cylinders, spark plugs, and the exhaust system.</p> <p>Your engine is not working at peak operating temperature when it's idling, so fuel does not go through complete combustion.</p> <p>Idling allows water to condense in the exhaust system causing corrosion and can reduce the life of the exhaust system.</p> |
| Shutting off and restarting is hard on your engine and uses more fuel. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ ◆ | <p>More than 10 seconds of idling uses more fuel than restarting the engine.</p> <p>Frequent restarting has little impact on engine components</p> |
| Idling for a few minutes doesn't matter. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ | <p>Idling wastes fuel and money. Idling five minutes here and there through out the day can add up to more than a gallon of fuel wasted in a day.</p> <p>Burning gasoline contributes to climate change gases. Every gallon of gas produces about 20 pounds of carbon dioxide when combusted.</p> <p>Vehicle idling contributes to air pollution in the local and community level.</p> <p>If you're going to be parked for more than 10 seconds, turn off your engine</p> |
| I need to keep my car running to keep it warmed up in the winter. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ | <p>Cars only need to about 30 seconds of idling on a cold day before driving. Today's modern engines warm up more quickly once a car is operating.</p> |
| Why do we idle? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ | <p>Waiting for passengers</p> <p>In drive-through lanes at fast-food restaurants or banks</p> <p>Running quick errands</p> <p>Stopping to talk to an acquaintance or friend</p> <p>Preparing to leave the house</p> <p>Listening to the end of a song or story on the radio</p> |
| What should you do? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ | <p>TURN IT OFF. Turn off the engine if the vehicle is going to be parked for more than 10 seconds (except in traffic).</p> <p>DRIVE. Drive your vehicle to warm it up rather than idling (no more than 30 seconds is needed on winter days to circulate the oil through the engine).</p> <p>GET A TUNE UP. A poorly maintained car can release as much as 100 times the pollution of a well maintained car.</p> <p>TRIP CHAIN. Combine multiple trips into one outing.</p> <p>SPREAD THE WORD. Tell a friend about how to save money, reduce pollution, and not idle.</p> |

Do you want more information or have questions? sustainablebelmont@gmail.com.

The Massachusetts Anti-Idling Law

Massachusetts General Law (MGL), Chapter 90, Section 16A,
310 Code of Massachusetts Regulation (CMR), Section 7.11 and

MGL, Chapter 111, Sections 142A – 142M

MGL, Chapter 90, 16A and 310 CMR, 7.11:

“No person shall cause, suffer, allow, or permit the unnecessary operation of the engine of a motor vehicle while said vehicle is stopped for a foreseeable period of time in excess of five minutes. 310 CMR 7.11 shall not apply to:

- Vehicles being serviced, provided that operation of the engine is essential to the proper repair thereof, or
- Vehicles engaged in the delivery or acceptance of goods, wares, or merchandise for which engine assisted power is necessary and substitute alternate means cannot be made available or,
- Vehicles engaged in an operation for which the engine power is necessary for an associated power need other than movement and substitute alternate power means cannot be made available provided that such operation does not cause or contribute to a condition of air pollution.”

Note: the regulation applies to all motor vehicles.

Penalties

Penalties can range from \$100(MGL Chapter 90, Section 16A) to as much as \$25,000 (MGL Chapter 111, Section 142A);
Drivers and/or companies can be held responsible for paying the fine;
Local police have the authority to enforce the law, as do health officials or other officials who hold enforcement authority.

**Sustainable Belmont
Idling Reduction Pledge**

One way you can ensure cleaner air in our community and around our schools, places of worship, and parks is to turn off your vehicle's engine when waiting to pick up your child, running errands, or talking to a neighbor.

Sign and return the pledge. By signing this pledge you are joining with others in our community to improve air quality and help everyone breath easier. We're collecting this information so we can know how many people are joining us in this effort.

By reducing idling you will:

- **Protect our community and children from harmful exhaust fumes**
- **Reduce air pollutants that contribute to smog and climate change**
- **Reduce fuel consumption**
- **Reduce engine wear and tear**
- **Save money on fuel and engine repairs**

Questions? e-mail sustainablebelmont@gmail.com

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Idling Reduction Pledge**

I, _____ pledge that I

Name _____

Will Improve and Protect Air Quality in our community by turning off my vehicle's engine when I am parked or waiting.

Signed by _____

Date _____

Faith Community _____

If you would like more information about Sustainable Belmont or would like to be on our mailing list:

e-mail _____

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